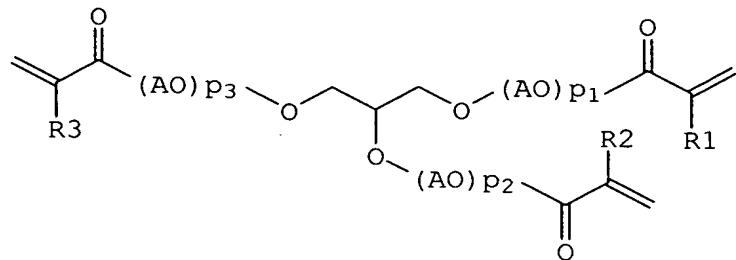


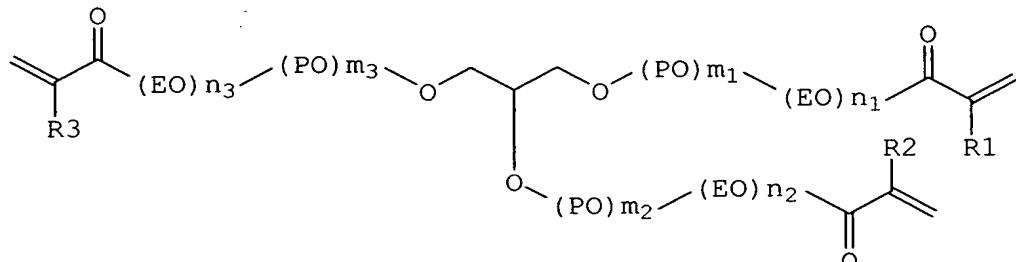
IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) An ester F of the formula Ia



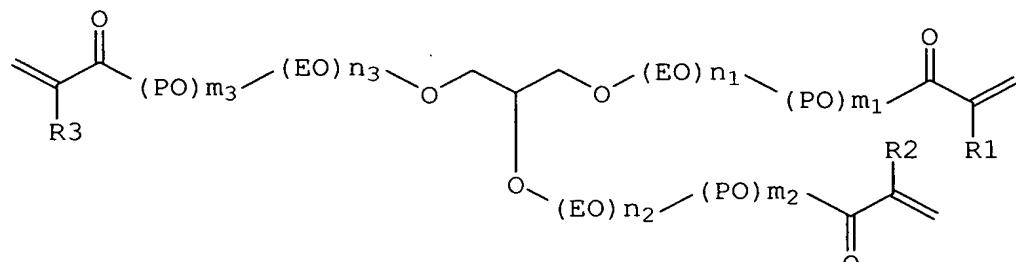
Ia

or formula Ib



Ib

or formula Ic



Ic

wherein AO is for each AO independently EO or PO,

where EO is O-CH<sub>2</sub>-CH<sub>2</sub>-,  
PO is at each instance independently O-CH<sub>2</sub>-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)- or O-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)-CH<sub>2</sub>-  
m<sub>1</sub> + m<sub>2</sub> + m<sub>3</sub> + n<sub>1</sub> + n<sub>2</sub> + n<sub>3</sub> is 3, 4, or 5,  
m<sub>1</sub> + m<sub>2</sub> + m<sub>3</sub> is 1, 2, 3, or 4,  
p<sub>1</sub> + p<sub>2</sub> + p<sub>3</sub> is 3, 4, or 5, and  
R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, and R<sub>3</sub> are independently H or CH<sub>3</sub>,  
wherein at least one AO is PO and at least  
one further AO is EO.

2. (Cancelled)

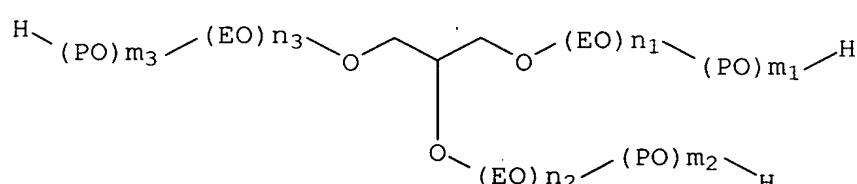
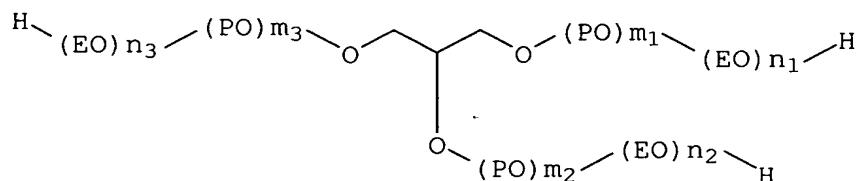
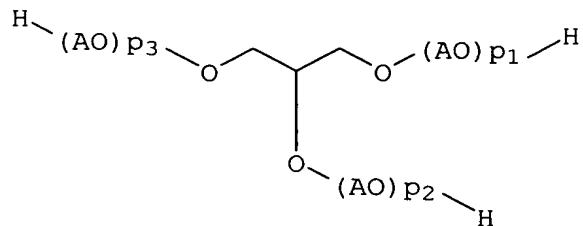
3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently amended) ~~An~~ The ester F as  
per any of claims claim 1 to 3 wherein m<sub>1</sub> + m<sub>2</sub> + m<sub>3</sub> +  
n<sub>1</sub> + n<sub>2</sub> + n<sub>3</sub> or p<sub>1</sub> + p<sub>2</sub> + p<sub>3</sub> is equal to 3 or 5.

5. (Currently amended) ~~An~~ The ester F as  
per any of claims claim 1 to 4 wherein 3 POs are pres-  
ent in total.

6. (Currently amended) ~~An~~ The ester F as  
per any of claims claim 1 to 5 wherein at least one PO  
is present in each of the 3 alkoxy chains of glycerol.

7. (Currently amended) A process for preparing an ester F as per any of claims claim 1 to 6 of from an alkoxylated glycerol of the formula IIa, IIb, or IIc



wherein AO, EO, PO, n1, n2, n3, m1, m2, m3, p1, p2, and p3 are each as defined in any of claims claim 1 to 6,

with and (meth)acrylic acid, comprising the steps of

a) reacting the alkoxylated glycerol with the (meth)acrylic acid in the presence of at least one esterification catalyst C, ~~and~~ ~~of~~ at least one polymerization inhibitor D, and optionally ~~also~~ ~~of~~ a water-azeotroping solvent E to form ~~an~~ the ester F,

b) optionally removing from the reaction mixture some or all of the water formed in a), during and/or after a),

f) optionally neutralizing the reaction mixture,

h) when a solvent E ~~was~~ is used, optionally removing ~~this~~ the solvent E by distillation, and/or

i) stripping with a gas which is inert under the reaction conditions.

8. (Currently amended) A The process as claimed in of claim 7 wherein

~~the~~ a molar excess of (meth)acrylic acid to alkoxylated glycerol is at least 3.15:1 and

the optionally neutralized (meth)acrylic acid present in the reaction mixture after the last process step substantially remains in the reaction mixture.

9. (Cancelled)

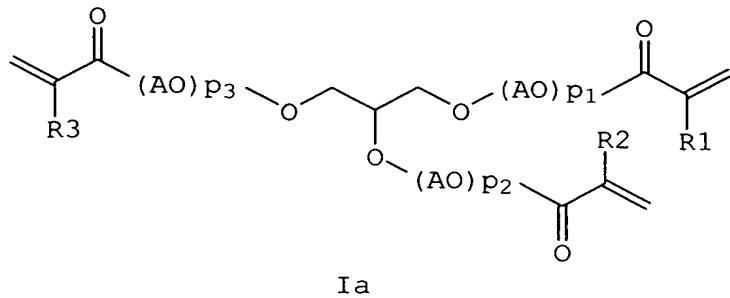
10. (Currently amended) A The process as  
~~claimed in any of claims~~ claim 7 to 9 wherein the  
(meth)acrylic acid is not more than 75% by weight re-  
moved from the reaction mixture obtained after the last  
process step, which reaction mixture contains the ester  
F.

11. (Currently amended) A The process as  
~~claimed in any of claims~~ claim 7 to 10 wherein the  
reaction mixture obtained after the last process step,  
which comprises the ester F, has a DIN EN 3682 acid  
number of at least 25 mg of KOH/g.

12. (Currently amended) A The process as  
~~claimed in any of claims~~ claim 7 to 11 wherein the  
reaction mixture obtained after the last process step,  
which comprises the ester F, has a (meth)acrylic acid  
content of at least 0.5% by weight.

13. (Currently amended) A The process as  
~~claimed in any of claims~~ claim 7 to 12 wherein the  
molar ratio of (meth)acrylic acid to alkoxylated  
glycerol in reaction step a) is at least 15:1.

14. (Currently amended) A process for preparing a crosslinked hydrogel, comprising the steps of  
k) polymerizing an ester F as per any of  
claims claim 1 to 6, or an ester F of the formula Ia



wherein AO is for each AO independently EO or PO,

where EO is O-CH<sub>2</sub>-CH<sub>2</sub>-,

PO is at each instance independently O-CH<sub>2</sub>-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)- or O-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)-CH<sub>2</sub>-

p<sub>1</sub> + p<sub>2</sub> + p<sub>3</sub> is 3, 4, or 5,

R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, and R<sub>3</sub> are independently H or CH<sub>3</sub>, with (meth)acrylic acid, with optionally an additional monoethylenically unsaturated compound N, and optionally also at least one further copolymerizable hydrophilic monomer M, in the presence of at least one free-radical initiator K and optionally of at least one grafting base L,

1) optionally postcrosslinking the reaction mixture obtained from k),

m) drying the reaction mixture obtained from k) or 1), and

n) optionally grinding and/or sieving the reaction mixture obtained from k), 1), or m).

15. (Currently amended) A The process as claimed in of claim 14 wherein ~~for the ester F~~ AO is EO.

16. (Currently amended) A The process for preparing a crosslinked hydrogel, comprising steps a) to i) ~~as per any of claims of claim 7 to 15~~ and additionally

k) polymerizing the reaction mixture from one of stages a) to i) if performed, with an optionally additional monoethylenically unsaturated ~~compounds~~ compound N, and optionally ~~also~~ at least one further copolymerizable hydrophilic monomer M, in the presence of at least one free-radical initiator K and optionally ~~eff~~ at least one grafting base L,

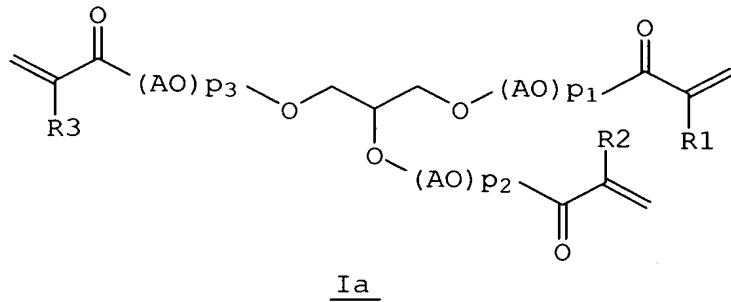
l) optionally postcrosslinking the reaction mixture obtained from k),

m) drying the reaction mixture obtained from k) or l), and

n) optionally grinding and/or sieving the reaction mixture obtained from k), l), or m).

17. (Currently amended) ~~Polymer obtainable~~  
~~A polymer prepared by a the process as per any of~~  
~~claims claim 14 to 16.~~

18. (Currently amended) ~~Crosslinked A~~  
~~crosslinked hydrogel containing comprising at least one~~  
~~hydrophilic monomer M in copolymerized polymerized form~~  
~~crosslinked with an ester F as per any of claims of~~  
~~claim 1 to 6 or an ester F of formula Ia~~



~~where wherein AO is for each AO independently~~  
~~EO or PO,~~

~~where EO is O-CH2-CH2-,~~

~~PO is at least instance independently O-CH2-~~  
~~CH(CH3)- or O-CH(CH3)-CH2-~~

~~p1 + p2 + p3 is 3, 4, or 5,~~

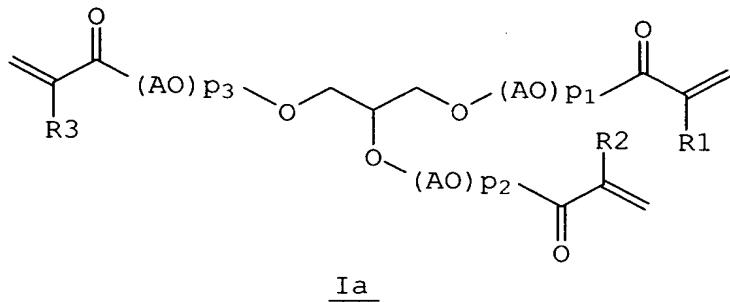
~~R1, R2, and R3 are independently H or CH3.~~

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Currently amended) A composition of matter comprising

from 0.1% to 40% by weight of at least one ester F as per any of claims of claim 1 to 6 or an ester F of formula Ia



wherein AO is for each AO independently EO or PO,

where EO is O-CH<sub>2</sub>-CH<sub>2</sub>-

p<sub>1</sub> + p<sub>2</sub> + p<sub>3</sub> is 3, 4, or 5,

R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, and R<sub>3</sub> are independently H or CH<sub>3</sub>, and (meth)acrylic acid,

0.5-99.9% by weight of at least one hydrophilic monomer M,

0-10% by weight of at least one esterification catalyst C,

0-5% by weight of at least one polymerization inhibitor D, and

0-10% by weight of a solvent E,

with the proviso that the sum total is always 100% by weight.

22. (Currently amended) A composition of matter as per of claim 21, further comprising a diluent G ad 100% by weight.

23. (Currently amended) Crosslinked A  
crosslinked hydrogel obtainable prepared from a  
composition of matter as per claim 21 or 22 and  
additionally

- ↳ optionally postcrosslinking the reaction mixture obtained, postcrosslinked
  - m) drying the reaction mixture obtained directly or from l), and
  - n) optionally grinding and/or sieving the reaction mixture obtained directly or from l) or m).

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Currently amended) Crosslinked A  
crosslinked hydrogel having a saponification index of  
less than 10, preferably less than 8, and especially  
less than 5.

26. (Currently amended) Crosslinked A  
crosslinked hydrogel as per any of claims claim 17, 18,  
19 or 23 having a saponification index of less than 11,  
preferably less than 10, more preferably less than 8,  
and especially less than 5.

27. (Currently amended) Crosslinked A  
crosslinked hydrogel as per any of claims claim 17, 18,  
19, 23, 25 or 26 having a residual crosslinker content  
of less than 10 ppm, preferably less than 8 ppm, more  
preferably less than 5 ppm.

28. (Cancelled)

29. (New) An article comprising a polymer prepared according to the method of claim 14.

30. (New) The article of claim 29 selected from the group consisting of a hygiene article, a packaging material, and a nonwoven.

31. (New) The crosslinked hydrogel of claim 25 having a saponification index of less than 8.

32. (New) The crosslinked hydrogel of claim 26 having a saponification index of less than 8.

33. (New) The crosslinked hydrogel of claim 26 having a saponification index of less than 5.

34. (New) The crosslinked hydrogel of claim 27 having a residual crosslinker content of less than 5 ppm.